

ANNUAL REPORT

2024



Hinterland
Bush Links

CONNECTING | RESTORING | PROTECTING

THE 2023-2024 MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

- President: Fergus FitzGerald
- Secretary: Elaine McKean
- Treasurer: Damian Hooper
- Committee Members: Apostolis Hadoulis
Donna McCarthy
Liz Saunders

HINTERLAND BUSH LINKS STAFF

- Manager: Aleisha Keating
- Project Officer: Louise Court



TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the Hinterland Bush Links region, the Kabi Kabi, Jinibara and Wakka Wakka People. We pay respect to elders past, present and emerging.

HINTERLAND BUSH LINKS INC.

ABN 12314200850
www.hinterlandbushlinks.org





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PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT

Fergus Fitzgerald
President



I'm delighted to present a statement from my first year as President of Hinterland Bush Links for 2023-24.

My involvement goes back more than 10 years to the early days, as we were establishing this important community environmental organisation. I started by bringing a number of Tamil asylum seekers, who were living on the Sunshine Coast under a national homestay program, to join in our weeding programs, now known as **Roving Restorers**. These young men had no work rights but were keen to do something useful in the community. At the same time, they were keen to learn more about life here and to understand the Australian vernacular.

Hinterland Bush Links has continued to offer opportunities like these to people from far away,

as well as locals, at the same time benefitting from the experiences and efforts these volunteers have contributed. For example, this year we have enjoyed the company and toil of José from Ecuador and Yosuke from Japan, as well as a committed band of Roving Restorers, some of whom have been weeding and planting since before my time. Your contributions have been invaluable, your fellowship and fun have been priceless.

A particular drawcard for Roving Restorers events during the year has been planting seedlings as part of our **Koala Habitat Project**. It is always rewarding to know that these efforts contribute to extending and restoring essential habitat for not only our iconic koalas, but all the other native plants and animals that make up a vibrant and sustainable ecosystem.

We have been able to achieve this success thanks to who turn up, but to all of the landholders who have offered their properties to be part of this project and who commit to maintaining the plantings after the 'volunteer army' has departed. We also rely on essential partnerships with other organisations and agencies to enable this work to happen. Barung Landcare support these plantings with site preparation, or through clearing invasive weeds such as lantana that is inhibiting koala and other animals' movement along wildlife corridors. Another wonderful example of these partnerships is a major tree planting event at the Tuan Environmental Reserve, working with the Bunya Bunya Country Aboriginal Corporation and Sunshine Coast Council to plant 1000 seedlings on a Super Sunday morning.

Our other 'signature project' is the **Upper Mary Valley Weed Vine Project (UMVWVP)**, which we initiated in 2012. The project objective is to control serious weed vine infestations (Cat's claw creeper, Madeira vine and Dutchman's pipe) from the upper catchment of the biodiverse-rich Mary Valley to protect native riparian vegetation,

to minimise sedimentation from streambank collapse and to prevent reinfestation downstream. In 2023-24 we continued this important work in the Little Yabba, Elaman Creek and Mary River catchments. As a result of this work, and after 12 years it was considered important to undertake a strategic review of this major project, which has established HBL as a recognised leader in environmental management in SE Queensland and beyond. The review will be carried out, in conjunction with our partners the Sunshine Coast Council and Barung Landcare and under the expert guidance of Matt Bateman, to whom we are indebted. The review will focus on aerial and ground surveys to determine the extent and severity of weed vines and prioritise further work in the catchment. There are opportunities to tap into the exciting new environmental DNA (eDNA) pilot studies being undertaken by the Council to identify weed distribution from water samples downstream. Armed with this information, we will then develop strategic priorities and revise the Strategic Plan.

As I reflect on the last twelve months, I am impressed with the achievements we have made in what has been a challenging time for organisations like ours and the many people who have worked to deliver these outcomes. There is continual pressure to source funding to sustain our existing programs and to extend our reach and impact in the face of continual threats to the natural world. Despite a very impressive grant application for a project to **Enhance Landscape Resilience in the Upper Mary Valley** under the Queensland Natural Resource Recovery Program, which could have underwritten our UMVWVP for the next 4 years, we were unsuccessful in a very competitive bidding process. We are actively pursuing a number of other funding opportunities.

We have benefitted from the generosity of our many donors, some of whom have been



Winners of the Sunshine Coast Biosphere - Community Awards 2024

'major donors' for many years: Libby and Marek Malter, the McMasters, Simon and Sue Gedda and Susie Duncan and Barry Traill. Range of Motion Physiotherapy has also continued its monthly corporate sponsorship. This money has enabled Hinterland Bush Links to invest in identifying and pursuing opportunities to ensure that we continue to undertake our work in a financially sustainable way into the future.

Our biggest contribution to our success has come from our dedicated and highly skilled staff: Aleisha Keating and Louise Court. They both joined us last financial year at a time when the organisation was undergoing a major transition, following the departure of our founder, Susie Duncan, and the move to a sharper business focus under Tammy Kowitz. As President, it has been reassuring to work with Aleisha and her professionalism in identifying and managing the risks and threats to both our projects and the organisation as a whole. Aleisha has strengthened our standing across the broader community

through the relationships and partnerships that are essential to our achievements. This was aptly recognised when we were co-recipients of the Sunshine Coast Biosphere - Community Awards - **Healthy Planet award** this year for our outstanding environmental conservation outcomes in the Sunshine Coast Biosphere community.

It's been a pleasure to see Louise grow in confidence as she manages Roving Restorers, writes the high-quality monthly Bulletin, contributes her biological knowledge and represents Hinterland Bush Links as guest speaker at different public events.

I want to acknowledge the important contribution from my fellow **Management Committee** members: Liz Saunders as immediate past President; Elaine McKean, Secretary; Damian Hooper, Treasurer and committee members Donna McCarthy and Toli Hadoulis. Our bi-monthly meetings are 'major events' that we need to set aside half a day for! They also contribute

to many other activities and events throughout the year.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the passing of an important member of the Hinterland Bush Links 'family' during the year.

Rachael Stacy was an active landholder with her husband Kevin in restoring native vegetation on their beautiful Reesville property, and she worked as our treasurer on the Management Committee for several years, even as she struggled with serious health issues.

Rachael's passing and the aging of many of our long-term active supporters bring into sharp focus the need for our organisation to ensure that we are continually renewing as we go forward. In that regard, I'm very encouraged by the energy and skills that our newer supporters and staff are bringing to Hinterland Bush Links to build on the achievements of those of you who have contributed so much to our organisation.

MANAGER'S STATEMENT

Aleisha Keating
Manager



What a wonderful year it has been leading Hinterland Bush Links.

There have been so many highlights for me both personally and professionally. I have continued to enjoy working with such a dedicated community of volunteers and members who embrace our vision of improving wildlife corridors and enhancing biodiversity across the Sunshine Coast Hinterland.

Our tree planting events as part of our Koala Habitat project have been memorable for me. I relish the opportunity to not only expand habitat for koalas, but also to welcome so many volunteers to each property, and provide opportunities for our community to learn about koalas, tree species we plant and about the broader ecosystem. It has been a real

joy to witness volunteers from a full spectrum of ages partake in these events and connect not only with the land, but also with each other. I have loved working with each individual landholder, hearing their stories and future intentions for habitat restoration on their properties, which always includes controlling weeds as well as maintenance of planted areas. It has been exciting to see the fruits of our combined labour, as the trees we planted earlier in the project grow.

I continue to be inspired by the long running Roving Restorers programs which have partly overlapped with our Koala Habitat project. This core group of volunteers has been a crucial part of the success of the Koala Habitat project, as well as providing essential support to landholders to remove invasive weeds and plant trees. The camaraderie of this group makes each event fun to attend and there is always something more to learn, from new skills to rare flora and fauna, each property and event is different! It was also great to visit our Noosa Roving Restorers group, run by Noosa and District Landcare and see the wonderful work they are doing in the region.

Three funding bodies supported our Upper Mary Valley Weed Vine project this year, helping us to treat invasive weed vines across 27 properties. This long-term project is reducing the severity and extent of weed vines in many areas of the upper catchment, which is essential for the health of the whole Mary River catchment and inevitably the Great Barrier Reef. We have made good progress in some areas; I was impressed to observe a flying fox colony returning to roost in an area that was previously engulfed by weed vines. We look forward to reviewing our strategic plan in the coming year to further improve the outcomes this project delivers.

I was honoured to receive the Healthy Planet Award on behalf of Hinterland Bush Links at the Sunshine Coast Community Biosphere Awards.

We were co-recipients of this category with Craig Hosmer and Daryl Reinke, who are also strongly committed to environmental conservation. This award was recognition of the on-going work Hinterland Bush Links has been doing for over a decade to advocate for sustainable land stewardship, enhancement of the natural environment and the provision of practical conservation activities for the community to be involved in. It is an honour to play an active role in the Sunshine Coast Biosphere, helping to make this region better for both people and nature.

Our Project Officer, Louise Court, has been a pleasure to work alongside this year. Louise has efficiently run our Hinterland Roving Restorers program, liaising with landholders, volunteers and suppliers to help deliver an incredible number of volunteer events, particularly for the Koala Habitat project. She is a strong leader and educator, avidly sharing her knowledge of flora and fauna and helping the younger generation learn important tree planting skills. Thanks, Louise, for your immensely valuable contribution to this organisation and the community.

I thank our funders, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, Sunshine Coast Council, Seqwater (through Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee), Department of Transport and Main Roads and Noosa Council. I also thank everyone who has donated to Hinterland Bush Links, as well as our partners, particularly Barung Landcare, Noosa and District Landcare, who help deliver our programs.



MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Our Management Committee are a cohesive, dedicated team who have met bi-monthly this year. Many of them also attend our volunteer events. We are grateful for their oversight and support and all the time and energy they give to Hinterland Bush Links.



Damian Hooper (Treasurer), Fergus FitzGerald (President), Elaine McKean (Secretary), Liz Saunders, Donna McCarthy, Toli Hadoulis.

STAFF

This year we employed two paid staff members who have successfully delivered our projects and programs:

Aleisha Keating MANAGER

MSc Education for Sustainability, BSc (Hons) Physical Geography

Aleisha managed the organisation, reporting directly to the Management Committee, as well as overseeing all our projects and programs.



Louise Court PROJECT OFFICER

BSc Environment & Sustainability and Plant Agricultural Science, Diploma in Project Management

Louise led the Hinterland Roving Restorers program and oversaw the Noosa Roving Restorers program. She played a key role in delivering the Koala Habitat project and Upper Mary Valley Weed Vine project



HIGHLIGHTS 2023-2024

KOALA HABITAT PROJECT

- **2,425 trees** planted for koala food and habitat on **8 private properties**
- **2.6 ha** revegetated
- **3.1 ha** of lantana cleared on **16 properties**
- **510** volunteer hours
- **Landholders guide** to protecting and restoring koala habitat published
- **Koala Conservation Workshop:** Empowering Landholders for Habitat Restoration

ROVING RESTORERS

- **35** weeding and tree planting events over **32 properties**
- **954** volunteer hours
- **1,255 trees** planted
- **9.3 ha** of land weeded
- Over **\$47,000** of in-kind labour provided by Roving Restorers volunteers

UPPER MARY VALLEY WEED VINE PROJECT

- Weeds of National Significance treated across **27 properties** (Cat's claw creeper, Madeira vine, Dutchman's pipe)
- **20.4 ha** of land chemically treated for invasive weeds
- Worked with **20** landholders
- **Weed control** in four sub-catchments of the Mary River

COMMUNITY & LANDHOLDER EDUCATION

- **1 x talk** at koala habitat community tree planting:
 - Olivia, Cashew (pro field k9 dog) and Shaggy from Owad Environmental
- **2 x Roving Restorers** talks:
 - Road Ecology with Chris Johnston
 - Evolution and Conservation of Heath and Wallum with Hilary Pearl (PhD).
- **2 x educational** walking tours with Susie Duncan
- **12 x monthly Bulletins** sent to members
- Increased **social media** presence and educational content
- **4 x talks** at partner events



BECOME A MEMBER

As a Member of Hinterland Bush Links become part of a passionate, fun and inclusive community interested in caring for native vegetation in the Sunshine Coast Hinterland.

You'll have access to volunteer opportunities, a way you can make a real difference in protecting, restoring and connecting native vegetation

<https://www.hinterlandbushlinks.org/membership/>

STRATEGIC PLAN 2022–2027

Vision

Landscape-scale conservation to connect, restore and protect native vegetation.

Mission

To empower and support local landholders to protect, connect and restore native vegetation, ultimately improving landscape-scale wildlife corridors and helping secure biodiversity for all of nature for longevity.

Focus Areas

The core areas of focus for Hinterland Bush Links, as outlined in our Strategic Plan are:

Habitat restoration

Community involvement

Community education

Organisational sustainability



HABITAT RESTORATION

Restoring habitats through creating strategic wildlife corridors is a key priority for Hinterland Bush Links.

We do this by undertaking on-ground weeding and tree planting work through our two Roving Restorers programs and the Koala Habitat project, which targets areas of known koala habitat.

We continue to target Weeds of National Significance in several sub-catchments in the Upper Mary River Valley through our Upper Mary Valley Weed Vine project.

Through our Roving Restorers and Koala Habitat project events we have assisted landholders with revegetation and weed management on their properties, which enhances biodiversity in strategic areas. The work we do is important in providing landholders with support in restoring native vegetation on their properties. This contributes to connecting wildlife corridors across the Sunshine Coast Hinterland and Noosa District, which has benefits not only for individual landholders, but for the whole community across the region, through enhanced biodiversity and more resilient landscapes. Through these projects we aim to create broader impacts through building the capacity of our community to effect positive environmental change.

Koala Habitat Project

This project aims to expand and restore native vegetation in areas of koala habitat and known koala populations across the Sunshine Coast Hinterland. The continuation of our Koala Habitat project into the 2023-24 financial year has significantly engaged our team through a range of activities. We worked with landholders across the region, undertook site visits, contracted professional lantana removal and treatment, organised community tree planting events and volunteer weeding days and contracted tree planting in areas unsuitable for volunteers.

This work is largely funded by a grant from the Australian Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, as part of the Saving Koalas Fund Community Grants program. Additional support has been provided by Queensland Koala Crusaders, Koala Action Inc., Barung Landcare and Sunshine Coast Council. Alongside this, the project is supported by numerous dedicated landholders and volunteers whose invaluable contributions continue to drive the success of this initiative.



Landholder Guide. Design by BJN Graphic Design





Volunteer tree planting events	10
Volunteer weeding events	11
Volunteer hours	510
Koala food and habitat trees planted	2,425
Number of properties trees planted on	8
Area revegetated (ha)	2.6
Number of properties lantana cleared on	16
Area lantana cleared (ha)	3.1

As part of our Koala Habitat project, we developed a comprehensive guide specifically for landholders. This resource aims to empower landholders by offering valuable insights into the habitat, behaviour and conservation of koalas.

Grounded in scientific research and conservation best practice, the guide provides practical strategies to help landholders coexist with koalas while actively preserving their natural environment. It explores the ecological dynamics of koalas and their relationship with land management, providing landholders with knowledge to help support healthy koala populations and implement sustainable land practices.

Key topics covered:

1. Understanding threats to koalas
2. What is healthy koala habitat?
3. Coexisting with koalas – responsible stewardship
4. Planning and undertaking a revegetation project

We also held an event for landholders to delve into some of the topics on the landholder resource, see the Community Education section for more details.

We have had the privilege of revisiting properties where koala habitat plantings took place in early 2023. It has been immensely rewarding to witness the growth and sustainability of these planting

efforts, which are a testament to the dedication and hard work of our landholders and community. We extend our sincere gratitude to the landholders for their ongoing commitment to nurturing and maintaining the koala habitat trees and managing weeds in these areas.

The project is on track to be completed by the end of 2024, reaching our target of planting 5000 koala food and habitat trees and clearing lantana and other weeds on private and public properties across the Sunshine Coast Hinterland. Going forward, we will be scoping up a further project to do similar work to benefit koalas in the region.

Roving Restorers

The Roving Restorers is a long-standing group of dedicated volunteers, deeply committed to the protection of the landscape in the region. Their passion, time and energy are invaluable in supporting the health of native fauna and flora.

This year, the Roving Restorers group has been instrumental in advancing our Koala Habitat project. They have played a key role in weeding and tree planting activities and have provided

essential support during weekend community tree planting events. Many of the Roving Restorers turn up early for weekend events, helping with additional tasks and guiding less experienced volunteers.

Their contribution extends beyond the physical work; the Roving Restorers' efforts are integral to Hinterland Bush Links' broader restoration initiatives. Through their ongoing commitment, they

inspire landholders to continue conservation management practices long after our visits to their properties. The social aspect of Roving Restorers continues to be integral to its success. Volunteers have an opportunity to connect with each other while doing practical conservation activities and over a barista prepared coffee (or tea) and a sumptuous morning tea, which has become a highlight for many!

Achievements	Total	Hinterland	Noosa
Number of volunteer events	35	16	19
Number of properties assisted	32	16	16
Total volunteer hours ¹	954	540	414
Value of volunteer hours	\$47,376	\$26,816	\$20,559
Approximate area of weed removal (ha)	9.3	5.3	4
Number of trees planted	1255	925 ²	330

In the 2023-24 financial year, we hosted a total of 35 Roving Restorers events across the Sunshine Coast Hinterland and Noosa District regions, contributing an impressive \$47,376 in volunteer labour towards the restoration of local ecosystems. On average, 12 volunteers attended each event, demonstrating a remarkable level of commitment. Their efforts have had a significant impact, promoting natural regeneration across a total of 9.3 hectares of weed control and planting 1255 trees.

This work has contributed to the restoration of koala habitat and improved the connectivity of fauna habitats, enabling native species to move more freely across the landscape in search of food and mates.

We supported 32 landholders with native vegetation restoration on their properties. Weed management continues to be an

on-going issue for landholders in the area; many find it challenging to provide the maintenance required to reduce weed biomass on their properties. Many of the properties we visited are affiliated with Land for Wildlife, are Nature Refuges, or have Voluntary Conservation Agreements, demonstrating these landholders' deep commitment to land stewardship and conservation.

Collaborating with landholders fosters a sense of pride and stewardship, providing encouragement to continue sustainable conservation and land management practices. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all landholders who have graciously hosted us, and to our dedicated team of Roving Restorers for their passion and unwavering commitment to the landscape.

In the Hinterland region, we held 16 successful Roving Restorers events, clearing environmental



¹ Based on Volunteering Queensland calculator (median age 55-64 years)
² All of these trees are also captured in the Koala Habitat project statistics

weeds from over 5 hectares of land and planting a total of 925 trees. These activities were conducted in conjunction with our Koala Habitat project, focusing on expanding and enhancing habitat in areas known to support koala populations. We also maintained a strong emphasis on strengthening connective corridors, which are vital for the support and protection of both flora and fauna.

Volunteers in this program contributed a remarkable total of \$26,816 in labour towards the preservation and restoration of the Sunshine Coast Hinterland.

The Noosa Chapter of Roving Restorers was coordinated by Tamara Kubica from Noosa and District Landcare, providing volunteer bush regeneration services to Land for Wildlife, Nature Refuge, and Voluntary Conservation Agreement properties.

The Noosa Roving Restorers visited 16 properties and held 19 events. This group contributed 414 labour hours to benefit the environment, carrying out weeding over of 4 hectares and planting 330 trees in the Noosa Shire. Thank you to Tamara, Noosa and District Landcare and our amazing community of volunteers.

We were saddened to say farewell to Tamara, who managed the Noosa Roving Restorers Chapter since its inception in 2020. Her leadership and dedication have been invaluable to this project. We extend our deepest gratitude for her contribution and wish her the best in her future endeavours.

Looking ahead, we are excited to welcome Ered Fox as the new Project Officer and look forward to working with him and the Noosa and District Landcare team to together to continue important conservation work in the Noosa region.



Louise Court, Tamara Kubica, Ered Fox, Aleisha Keating



Upper Mary Valley Weed Vine Project

The Mary River catchment is highly valued for its biodiversity, water supply and ecological connection to the Great Barrier Reef. As a biodiversity hotspot, it supports the Lowland Rainforest of Subtropical Australia, which is listed as *Critically Endangered under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999)*.

The region is home to a diverse array of wildlife, including several endangered and vulnerable species such as the giant barred frog, Mary River turtle, white-throated snapping turtle, Mary River cod and Australian lungfish.

Parts of the catchment are heavily modified and are a significant source of fine sediment entering the Great Barrier Reef, with its waters flowing into the Coral Sea west of K'Gari. This underscores the importance of ongoing conservation efforts to protect both the catchment and the broader ecosystems it supports.

Invasive weed vines pose a significant threat to native vegetation and have a detrimental impact on riparian zones and waterway health in the Mary River catchment. Weeds of National Significance such as Cat's claw creeper and Madeira vine smother, kill and collapse native vegetation,

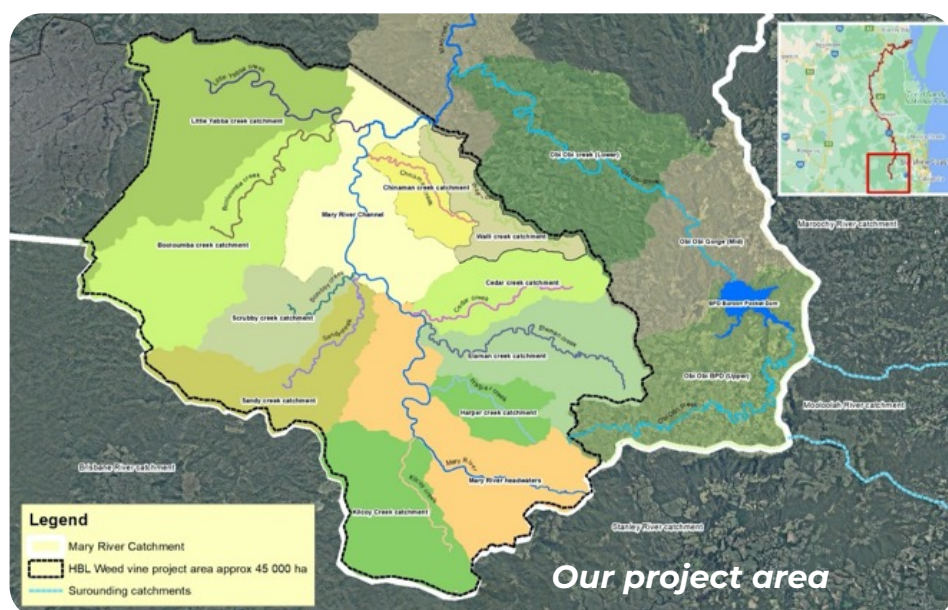
leading to stream bank erosion and sediment deposition into waterways. This degradation contributes to habitat loss for both terrestrial and aquatic wildlife. Dutchman's pipe is toxic to the larvae of the Richmond birdwing butterfly, listed as *Vulnerable* in Queensland. The seeds and tubers of these invasive vines can remain viable in the soil for over 10 years, spreading easily through wind and water movement. Managing these invasive species is critical for preserving the ecological health of the catchment and its native species.

The Upper Mary Valley Weed Vine Project, which Hinterland Bush Links has been leading since 2012, aims to reduce the biomass, extent and severity of these three highly invasive species of weed-vines. Without this work, these weeds would spread throughout the region, progressively taking over native vegetation and invading forests. Our strategy is to prioritise treatment in the upper catchment of the Mary River, to prevent weeds spreading further downstream, protecting water quality and enhancing habitat for wildlife and aquatic species. On-going work on properties over several years is vital to reduce weed biomass and extent.

With funding from Seqwater (via the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee), Sunshine Coast Council and the Department of Transport and Main Roads, this year we continued to work across three sub-catchments in the Upper Mary Valley catchment - Little Yabba, Cedar, and Elaman Creeks, as well as around the main Mary River channel. We engaged Barung Landcare's Natural Areas Services team to carry out on-ground works. Alongside this work, we are liaising with Sunshine Coast Council about their eDNA project; we are excited to see the research outcomes of this project and hopefully apply these to our future work.

We treated invasive weeds on 27 properties, working with 20 different landholders. Weeds were treated with a combination of mechanical and chemical treatment.

Through ongoing treatment efforts and multiple visits to properties over several years, we have observed varying trends in weed infestations. In some areas, there have been noticeable improvements, with a reduction in weed presence, while in other locations, infestations have intensified. In the past year we were pleased to see the return of a local flying fox colony to a preferred roosting tree that in previous years



has been inaccessible due to weed vine infestations. This good news story highlights the importance of the work we do to local wildlife populations. Notably, the 2022 flooding event significantly altered the landscape by transporting sediment, seeds, and vines downstream, which has shifted

the nature and distribution of infestations in certain areas.

These evolving conditions highlight the ongoing challenges of managing invasive species and the need for sustained conservation efforts. We are looking forward to working with Matt Bateman, Barung Landcare and Sunshine

Coast Council in the upcoming year as we update our Upper Mary Valley Weed Vine Project Strategic Plan to strengthen our focus and ensure we are targeting our efforts in the right places to continue to improve the riparian health of the Upper Mary River catchment.

Achievements	Total
Amount of contractor labour	93.25 labour days (746 hours)
Cash investment in on-ground works	\$54,999
Number of landholders assisted	20
Number of properties	27
Approximate area of weed removal (ha) (chemical herbicide, manual removal)	20.4
Sub-catchments where work undertaken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little Yabba Creek • Elaman Creek • Mary River



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Achievements	Total
Volunteer contribution	1,335 hours
Volunteers involved	>100 individuals (319 instances)
Properties and associated landholders involved	42
Members	383
Social media network	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1437 social media followers (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn)• 1067 Facebook group members

Community involvement is central to our work.

We value the input of community members and enjoy providing opportunities for people of all ages to contribute to conservation activities. Our relationships with landholders in the region are essential to our work; their commitment to ecosystem restoration provides the foundation for our projects and programs. Without our community we would not have the scale of impact that we do.

The Hinterland Bush Links community is dedicated, generous, passionate and talented, contributing their skills and knowledge in a diversity of ways. This year we had over 100 individuals volunteer with us, amounting to a total of 1,335 hours of volunteer labour. Volunteers of all ages are actively involved with bush regeneration through our Roving Restorers and Koala Habitat projects. This year we have welcomed many new faces, particularly to our popular weekend community planting days for the Koala Habitat project. We are also grateful to our seasoned volunteers who continue to volunteer at events.

Behind the scenes, volunteers have assisted with numerous tasks. Our volunteer Management Committee and Environmental Gift Fund Committee provide oversight of the organisation and meet regularly to

discuss organisational matters. We would like to give a special thanks to the following people for sharing their time and expertise with us over the last year:

- Mary Meadows – providing bookkeeping and other financial administrative support, member of the Environmental Gift Fund Committee
- Marilyn Fisher – member of the Environmental Gift Fund Committee
- Katie Johnston – mapping support
- Susie Duncan – leading educational walking tours
- Ben Ball – assisting with the development of the koala conservation landholder resource
- Vanda Grabowski – review of the koala conservation landholder resource
- Bevin Neil – website and graphic design (including this annual report!)
- Geoff Saunders – our very own event barista
- Chris Johnson – speaker at Roving Restorers
- Hilary Pearl – speaker at Roving Restorers

We have continued to strengthen and establish relationships with 42 private landholders to run our Upper Mary Valley Weed Vine project, Koala Habitat project and Roving Restorers program. We provide encouragement, support and advice to help them carry out conservation work on their land.

Collaborating with other community organisations helps us achieve more together. Over the past year, we have worked closely with numerous partners and stakeholders to deliver our projects and programs. We also attended and supported many of our partners' events. Our key partners and stakeholders have included: Great Eastern Ranges, Barung Landcare, Bunya Bunya Aboriginal Corporation, Koala Action Inc., Koala Crusaders Inc., Noosa and District Landcare, Queensland Water and Land Carers, Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee, Sunshine Coast Environment Council, Pranafest and Lake Baroon Catchment Care Group. We also worked with and/or received funding from Sunshine Coast Council, Noosa Council, Seqwater, Department of Transport and Main Roads, Moreton Bay Regional Council and Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water.

Barung Landcare was one of our key partners this year, delivering contracts to treat weeds, prepare sites for planting events, plant trees (on sites not suitable for volunteers) and supervise tree planting events. Their nursery grew every single one of the 2,425 trees we planted, and their nursery manager Cam Burton presented at our Koala Habitat project landholder workshop. Their team has been instrumental to the success of many of our projects. In addition, Charlotte Pond has ably supported us with bookkeeping.



COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Achievements	Total
Educational bulletins issued	12
Educational talks, walks & workshops	5
Guests at educational events	48
Attendance/presentations at partner events	7
Landholder resource published	1

Our aspiration is for our community to understand the benefits of protecting, restoring and connecting healthy native bushland and have confidence to undertake habitat restoration projects.

We educate through a variety of means, at our tree planting and weeding events, workshops, talks and walks, our monthly Bulletin and online social media presence.

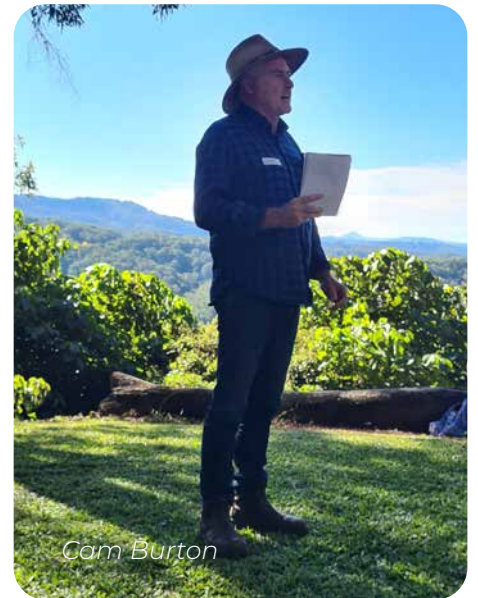
We integrate education into our Roving Restorers and Koala Habitat weeding and tree planting events. From learning the basics of how to plant a tree, key species we plant at each location, varying treatments and techniques to manage different invasive weeds and ways to make your property koala friendly, our team shared skills and knowledge with our event attendees, building capacity for further conservation efforts.

We also hosted three talks at events with external specialists. The Roving Restorers were fascinated to learn about road ecology from Chris Johnston, who brought a replica of the green bridge wildlife overpass in Brisbane. He shared information about different solutions to protecting wildlife in urban areas and around roads, including the importance of using multiple strategies to achieve the best outcomes. Dr Hilary Pearl shared

her PhD research on the genetic history and evolution of Heath and Wallum ecosystems with the Roving Restorers, giving insights into their unique traits and why these important ecosystems are under threat. Cashew the pro field k9 dog, who helps detect koalas, gave a demonstration of detecting koala scat at one of our community tree planting days, led by Olivia from Owad Environmental. We are grateful for all these speakers for sharing their insights with our community.

Private landholders are pivotal to the plight of koalas in this region, as a significant proportion of existing koala habitat is found on private land. Because of this, landholder education has been a key facet of the Koala Habitat project; we hosted a landholder workshop for koala conservation and habitat restoration and published an online guide for landholders. We were grateful to have Clancy Hall from Sunshine Coast Council, Cam Burton from Barung Landcare and Sean FitzGibbon from University of





Queensland as guest speakers at the landholder workshop, sharing about Council's koala conservation efforts, regional ecosystems in the Sunshine Coast and Hinterland area and research on koala behaviour respectively. Thank you to Damian and Melinda Hooper for hosting us on their property in Bald Knob. Together, the resource and workshop empowered landholders with knowledge of threats to koalas, how to make your property koala friendly and best practices on weed management and revegetation to restore koala habitat.

Our founder Susie Duncan continues to support Hinterland Bush Links' mission, hosting two guided forest walks in 2023-24. These have proved an enjoyable way to spend a day in the bush while learning about the surrounding ecosystem. In August, Susie led participants through

scribbly gum forest in Mapleton National Park, spotting native bush peas and orchids and finding evidence of glossy black cockatoos feeding on casuarina trees. In November, we explored tallowwood and rainforest on a scenic walk to Baxter Falls, noting the distinctive transitions between ecosystems, in both geology and flora, while descending to the falls.

Our popular monthly Bulletin keeps members up to date with the progress of our projects and upcoming volunteer opportunities. We share information about local wildlife and events. Our presence on social media has significantly grown over the past year. We use social media to not only promote our events and volunteer opportunities, but also to share relevant insights about our local environment. Our Facebook and Instagram reach and interactions have increased

significantly, meaning that we are able to reach more people with our education initiatives. We are building a strong following on LinkedIn, connecting with professionals working in this space and beyond.

We have continued to educate and connect with the broader Sunshine Coast and Hinterland community through attending and presenting at events run by our partners. This included several events on invasive weeds and animals run by Sunshine Coast Council and Moreton Bay Council, Barung Landcare's Wood Expo, Bunya Dreaming and several koala workshops and forums. We have relished the opportunity to share about our mission, projects and opportunities with a wide audience.



ORGANISATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

Achievements

Active and committed volunteer Management and Environmental Gift Fund Committees
Updated our Constitution and key organisational policies
Changed accounting software package
Development of marketing strategies
Transition event registration to Humanitix platform

Hinterland Bush Links strives for organisational excellence, with strong governance, leadership and business performance enabling effective delivery of our programs and projects.

We continue to have an active, committed and engaged volunteer Management Committee, who have met more regularly this year to provide oversight of the organisation and our key projects and programs. The Environmental Gift Fund Committee has effectively overseen the purposeful use of funds donated to Hinterland Bush Links. Together these committees ensure Hinterland Bush Links remains true to its mission and is run sustainably.

This year the Management Committee oversaw the update of our constitution, streamlining it and making it more fit for purpose to our evolving organisation. We also updated several organisational policies for the same reason.

Our operations were supported by the Sunshine Coast Council's Environment Levy Partnership three-year grant, which covers a portion of wages and essential operational costs. Alongside this, donations continued to provide money to support our operations and delivery of our many projects and programs. We acknowledge donations from all our donors, many

of whom have been supporting Hinterland Bush Links for many years. In the future, we envisage grants and donations continuing to be vital to support our work, alongside our intention to diversify our income sources to improve our financial sustainability.

A key project this year was the transfer from Quickbooks to the Xero software package for accounting. This has made account management more efficient and easier to manage. Thanks to Mary Meadows and Charlotte Pond of Barung Landcare for assisting us with this transition.

Narelle Walsh of Rellish Creative worked with us to develop marketing strategies to grow community engagement. You may have seen Narelle taking photos at many of our weekend planting events. Through her marketing services, we have grown our brand visibility and awareness in the community and seen a marked increase in engagement and reach on the various social media platforms. This has been vital to connect with our existing community and to also attract new volunteers and members from a broader geographic region. Thanks Narelle for your valuable insights and strategies.

We transitioned event registrations to the Humanitix platform, which was a change for many in our community who were used to using Barung Landcare's Wild Apricot platform. This change has also streamlined our event organisations. In the future we will

be utilising the platform further for volunteer sign-ins at events.

Several of our partners contribute to our organisational sustainability by providing professional services. Thank you to the following local businesses; we value your specialist input, helping us to streamline our processes and present a professional image:

- BJN Graphic Design – website and graphic design by Bevin Neil
- Suncoast Web Solutions – website hosting and IT support led by Neil McNulty



Narelle Walsh



TREASURER'S REPORT

Damian Hooper
Treasurer



This year our total income was \$266,716 and expenses were \$285,644 amounting to a deficit of \$18,929.

Note that total income excludes unexpended grant funds of \$84,800 that were carried forward to the 2024-25 financial year. The unexpended grant funds carried forward relate to funding received from the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water for our Koala Habitat project and from Sunshine Coast Council for our Upper Mary Valley Weed Vine project.

Approximately 78% of our income was derived from grants, with most of these funds targeting the Koala Habitat project and the Upper Mary Valley Weed Vine project.

We are now at the tail end of the very successful Koala Habitat project, with only a small amount of the grant funding (\$16,595) expected to come in from the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water to finalise this project.

Ongoing support in the way of grants from Seqwater (\$15,000), Sunshine Coast Council (\$50,000 over two years) and Department Transport and Main Roads (\$10,000) has been crucial in continuing the important works being undertaken in the Upper Mary Valley Weed Vine project.

Sunshine Coast Council's Environment Levy Partnership grant continues to provide core funding to cover part of our wages and operational costs with a 3-year grant of \$39,000 per year. The 2023-24 financial year is the final year of the current 3-year agreement for this funding. These funds are vital in providing support for running of our Roving Restorers program, as well as other projects and educational work not covered by grants. We are also pleased to advise that Sunshine Coast Council has committed to a further three years of this funding.

Noosa Council has continued its fantastic support of the Noosa Roving Restorers program by committing to a new Multi Year

Environment Collaboration grant that provides \$74,346 over three years to continue to fund the important work undertaken in the Noosa region by the Noosa Roving Restorers group.

Donation income of \$53,576 this financial year has provided valuable funds to support our on-ground works and running our projects. Thank you to all our donors both large and small. Every donation helps us to pay our wages and keep our projects running successfully.

You will see in the graphs on the following page that 49% of our expenses are wage related, with a further 39% of expenses going to work undertaken by contractors for our ongoing projects. With funds from grants only partially covering wage costs, the importance of donations in contributing to covering these costs remains essential to achieving the works undertaken. In addition to this, much of the work undertaken in the Koala Habitat project and the Roving Restorers program is completed by volunteers.

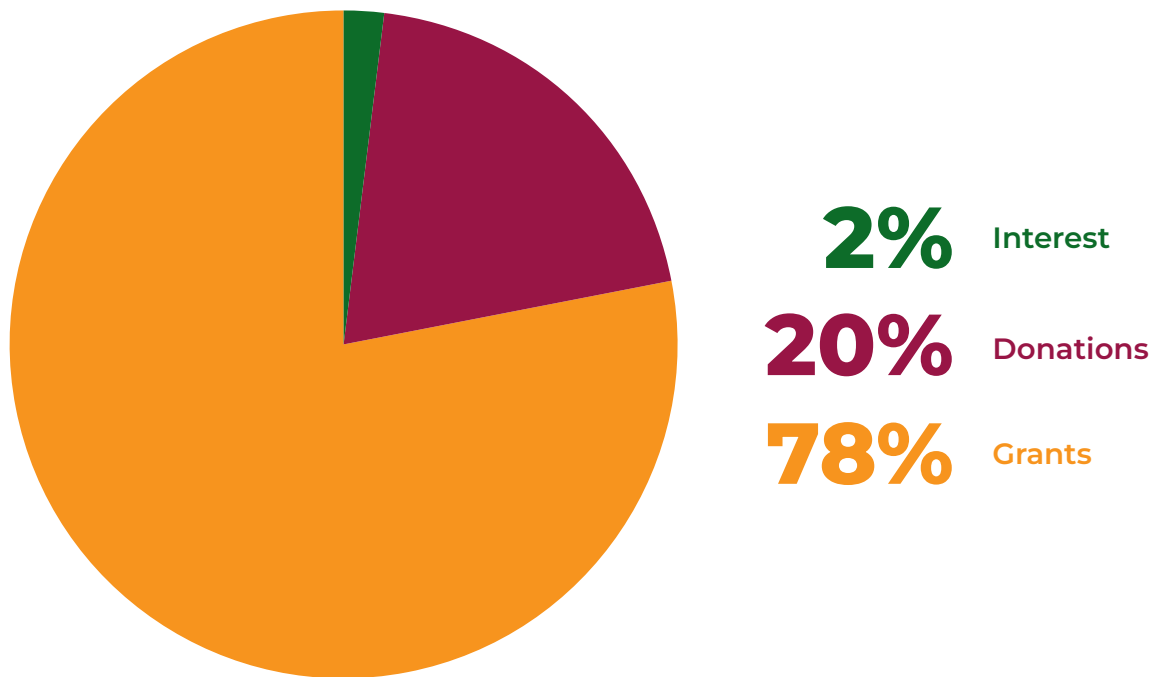
We are immensely grateful to all our volunteers, who contributed to a huge 1,335 hours of free labour this year. At a value of \$49.66/hr, this equates to an incredible \$66,296 worth of labour to support landholders and the environment across the Sunshine Coast Hinterland. Without our volunteers, the success of our projects and programs would not be achievable.

Thank you once again to Queensland Water and Land Carers for providing our insurance cover for the year, which is essential for running our organisation and on-ground work.

This year we also opened two term deposit accounts with \$50,000 invested in each of those. The interest earned on these accounts provides valuable additional funds while the deposited amounts await being allocated to the next exciting project.

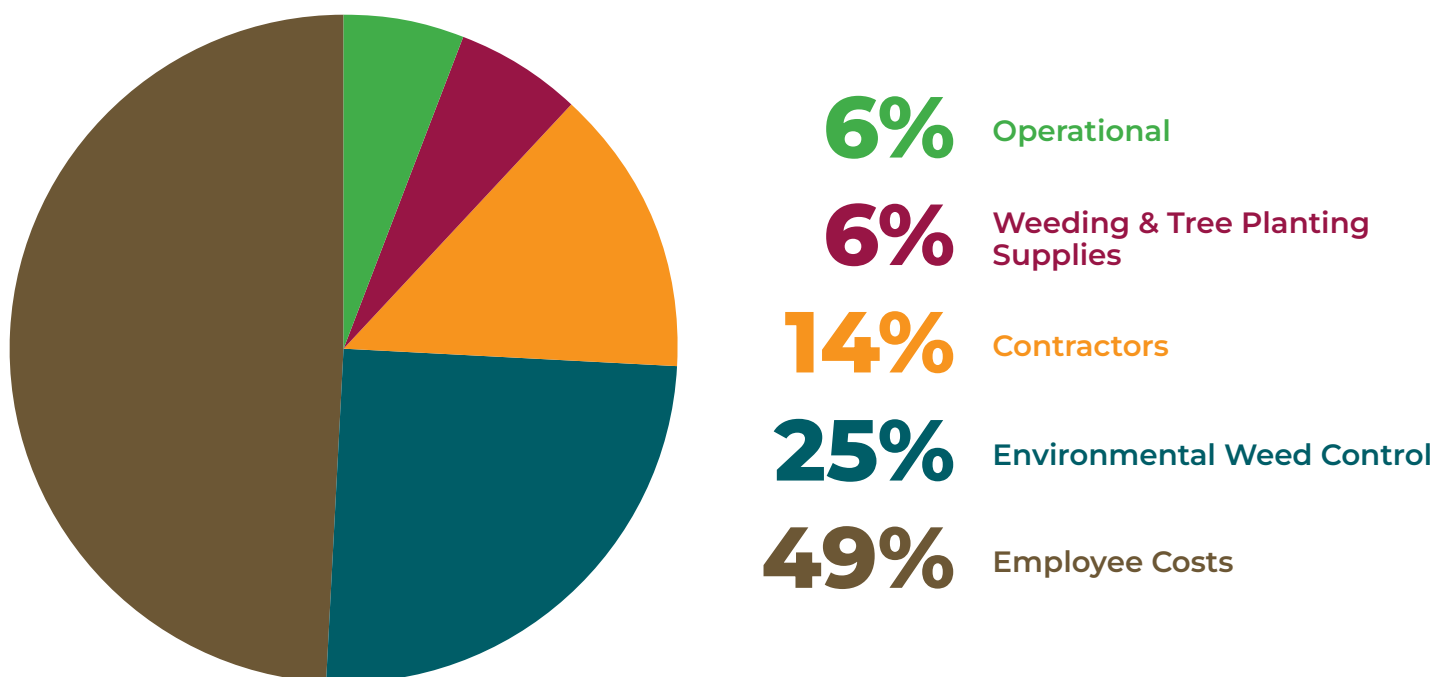
³ Based on Volunteering Queensland calculator (median age 55-64 years)

Income 2023-24



Expenses 2023-24

Note: Employee costs include wages, superannuation, travel expenses and workcover.



SPONSORS AND IN-KIND SUPPORTERS 2023-24



WORKING FOR OUR FUTURE



PRAN△FEST



LANDHOLDER RESOURCE



<https://www.hinterlandbushlinks.org/education-for-landholders/>

DONATE NOW



<https://www.hinterlandbushlinks.org/donate-now/>

BECOME A MEMBER



<https://www.hinterlandbushlinks.org/membership/>

BJN GRAPHIC
DESIGN

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